



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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Burmaster promotes teacher loan programs

Initiatives to attract highly qualified and diverse educators and make higher education more affordable

MADISON—Recognizing Oct. 7 as Higher Education Day in Wisconsin, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster is promoting her 2009-11 budget initiatives to provide financial support to new teachers working in high-needs schools.

“A highly qualified teacher is one of the most important factors, if not the most important factor, in student learning,” said Burmaster. “To increase the accessibility and affordability of postsecondary education for those who pursue education as a career, I am proposing a new High Need Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program and additional funding for the existing Minority Teacher Loan Program in the 2009-11 biennial budget.”

Wisconsin has long been known for the high quality of its teaching workforce. However, an increasing number of Wisconsin educators are reaching retirement age, and a shortage of teachers in critical subject areas continues to grow. Also, Wisconsin schools with higher numbers of students living in poverty face challenges recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Schools with concentrated student poverty tend to experience higher rates of teacher turnover and transfer, higher absenteeism, and fewer applications for open positions.

“In addition to making higher education more accessible and affordable, these programs will help us ensure all Wisconsin students, regardless of where they live or their economic circumstance, have access to highly qualified teachers,” said Burmaster.

To improve efforts to attract highly qualified and diverse teachers, the Department of Public Instruction is including the following requests in the 2009-11 biennial budget:

(more)

- \$500,000 annually for a new High Need Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, located in Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB), to attract teachers to higher poverty school districts in the critical shortage subject areas of science, technology, math, world language, English as a second language and bilingual programs, and special education; and
- \$237,900 annually to strengthen the existing Minority Teacher Loan Program in HEAB, as a complement to the new program, by increasing the number of students served and the amount of the awards.

“It is critical for Wisconsin’s public schools to attract and retain exceptional, diverse individuals who have the talent and desire to improve educational opportunities for all of our children,” said Burmaster.

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NOTES: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_150.pdf. Details about these and other budget proposals can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pb/index.html>.